

FRIENDLY LETTERS
TO
GIRLS



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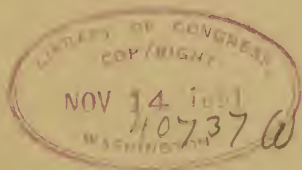
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FRIENDLY LETTERS TO GIRLS.

BY

HELEN A. HAWLEY,

AUTHOR OF "FRIENDLY TALKS WITH BOYS."



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LETTERS TO GIRLS.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WAS there ever a girl who did not like to get letters? I am permitted to open a correspondence with you, and though you may think it a rather one-sided affair, since I do all the writing, I shall know your thoughts will come back to me in response, and if I help you in any way, that will be a great reward.

First, I must tell you that I am a girl too, though I should be afraid to say how many years have passed over my head, and I don't quite know whether to call myself an old young girl or a young old girl. At all events, I haven't forgotten my young days, and I can't look on your bright faces without feeling that out of the experience of these later years might come some suggestions which would be of use to you. I cannot look at you

without wishing that in this formative time you may give heed to many little things, to many little habits, which will go far to making or marring your future lives. So, if you wonder what I shall write about, I can only say I shall write about anything and everything that comes into my mind, which I think may help you to grow into good, sweet, pure, attractive womanhood, because I believe such a womanhood as that is a great gift, and a power for blessing the world. I like to tell young girls that there is no grace of manner, no beauty of expression, no winsomeness of speech, but may be made the means of doing good, of being better servants to our Master. For I start out with the hope that each of you to whom I write has given the best gift to the Saviour—her heart. If there is one who has not, what can I say but to beg you to do it now? There is no right living without that to begin with.

Taking so much for granted, you will not wonder if every now and then a text from the Bible slips into these letters. I should be sorry to write anything which couldn't be fortified by God's word; and I think, too, if you were to search, you would be surprised to find how much is taught there about manners,

and dress, and speech, and looks, to say nothing of the noble qualities which go to make up character. It seems too bad that so many people think of religion as something apart from common, every-day life, something to be put on with the Sunday gown; so I dare say they might be shocked at that last sentence. I wish it may be far otherwise with my girls. I wish them to regard the Bible with reverence, but with loving reverence, much as they would the word of a Father, for such it is; and to know there is not a place in life where it will not direct them, either by principles or precise rules.

I had nearly forgotten to say that, though I write to the girls, I fancy many boys will read these letters too. For though it is one of the most dishonorable things to read a private letter without the owner's consent, that rule does not apply to a letter published in a newspaper. Then, too, I know when I was younger, if I had seen anything written to the boys, I should have been sure to read that first, and "judge others by yourself" is an old proverb. It wouldn't be strange if the boys should sometimes find bits adapted to them, since human nature is much the same, whether in boys or girls. It is said, too, that "every true

man has something of the woman in him." So, though I write to the sisters, I hereby give leave to the brothers to appropriate any hints which they may find suitable.

And now, dear girls, having introduced myself, may we be better friends by and by.

II.

FACES.

HAVE you read about the new composite photography, where by taking one negative upon another the faces of forty or fifty are blended into one? Do you suppose the scientists would call that "the survival of the fittest"?

As I sat down to write to-night it was with the strong desire to see you, not with portraits blended, but each as she is for herself. In my thoughts I try to picture you. There would be complexions, blonde and brunette; hair, curly and plain, long and short; eyes, blue and black, and hazel and gray; noses, Roman and pug, and saucily turned up; what an endless variety! but how shall I put them together as they belong?

Did you ever think about this wonderful human face? Millions of faces over this earth, and no two of them precisely alike? Even those who resemble each other so closely that

we cannot tell them apart have some trick of look, some little thing by which their nearest friends identify them, and say with confidence, "This is Clara, and that is Claribel." How this diversity brings to our thoughts the skill of the Creator!

But to return to your faces; I suppose there is not one of you but wishes to be beautiful, and a perfectly right and proper wish it is, too. Perhaps if I should say, take so much of this, and so much of that, and so much of the other, articles to be bought at the chemist's, mix them and use so and so, some of you would be silly enough to do it. But I shall do nothing of the sort. For there is beauty and beauty. You have heard of the kind which is only "skin deep"; it is the other kind we wish to talk about. Shall we call it beauty of expression? Well, I venture to say there is not the plainest girl of you all but may have that if she chooses, and though what I shall say about it will be only the merest hints, I am sure you are clever enough to carry them out.

Emerson says, "There is no beautifier of complexion, or form or behavior, like the wish to scatter joy, and not pain, around us." Suppose you should commit that sentence to mem-

ory, and often repeat it, and then let it live itself in your lives. Recall the friends who have made themselves dear by their unselfish ways. Does it ever occur to you to think their faces plain, or anything but lovely? Tennyson says of Mary, "Her eyes are homes of silent prayer." Could there be more beautiful eyes than those?

A dear friend of mine who had once passed through a bitter sorrow, told me that in the midst of it her father one day said to her, tenderly, "My daughter, don't let your face settle into lines. Break them up by forcing yourself to smile, even if you don't feel like it." It was wise advice, though hard to follow, but she did it bravely, and had her reward in the peaceful, happy face which is hers to this day.

You have no idea how quickly anger, irritability, impatience, or even petty vanity, leave their traces on the countenance. Perhaps each of us can remember the teasing remark of a big brother when we were indulging in a fit of the sulks, "Sis, how would you like to have your face freeze so?" Exasperating as it was, it carried a weighty truth.

I might go on giving hints which would make this letter too long. Some day I shall write about other things, which, you will have the wit to see, all tend toward this beauty of

expression, since there is nothing in character or life which does not help to make or mar it.

You know, dear girls, I do not speak of this to make you vain—that would quite spoil all. As I close let me repeat a stanza which will tell exactly what I do mean :

“ I would my friends should see
In my glad eyes the beauty of His face ;
Should learn that in His presence there is peace,
Strength, and contentment, that can never cease ;
And that His guiding grace
Can lead to patience and humility.”

III.

UNSELFISHNESS.

THERE is an "art in putting things." I might have placed "selfishness" at the head of this letter, but just think how much pleasanter the other word is; and as I wish to talk a little as to how we may have the quality it expresses, I will let it stand.

There is a brief text which says a great deal to me, and often helps me in my own efforts, as I hope it may you. "Even Christ pleased not Himself." He came as our example, and has promised to help us if we try to walk as He walked.

Now I know you all think of a selfish person as about the worst sort, and have no idea the term could apply to you. That is because you haven't lived long enough yet to be well acquainted with the little pronoun "I." Even some older persons never understand its power very well. I remember once that, in talking with a friend, I was regretting my own self-

love, when she said: "Why, I don't think that is a fault of mine. I don't want anything which belongs to another. I want other people to have their rights." "Ah!" I thought, "so do I, but my selfishness goes deeper than that," and the text I have quoted flashed into my mind.

I don't know that I can define unselfishness better than to say it is a denial of self, and that, you remember, is what the Bible says we are to do daily. Once I heard a sermon preached from the parable of the good Samaritan. The thought developed was, "Opportunity the test of character." Many, many times since then have I thought of it, as some slight action has revealed the heart within.

In a public library a man gathered all the files of daily newspapers, and put his elbow on them, for his own reading, so that no one could take one without special request, and that where others had the same rights as he. I had heard him talk well in prayer-meeting, I doubted not he was a good man and a Christian, but was that quite unselfish?

In the same place a woman rolled up the file and hid it behind a window-shutter while she went to supper, so that she might claim

it at once on her return. A little thing, you say; but was it unselfish?

Again, I saw some children playing on the sidewalk in the summer twilight. Along came a poor girl, ragged and dirty, with hardly clothes sufficient to cover the little body; buttons off or not fastened, the child was not clad enough for decency. The other children jeered at her and said naughty, cruel words. Upon the piazza of a house sat a dainty woman all in white; she looked pure as if no speck of soil had ever touched her. I heard her call the little waif to her, saw her take the child into her own room, heard her kind tones, and when, in a few moments, they came out, the buttons were all fastened, here and there a trusty pin was doing service, and the forlorn bit of humanity went on her way, safe at least for that time from insult. That was a little thing, too, but did it not show a sweet nature? I don't really think she wanted to touch the dirty child. I heard her scrubbing her hands directly, but there was a happy light in her eyes. She pleased not herself.

This brings another thought which may involve a paradox. (Girls, if you don't know the meaning of that word, stop and look it up—it will do you good. I say so, thinking

of my own young days and the charm the big dictionary had then, and still has, for me.) You will often find that the highest pleasure comes from not pleasing one's self. Just try it. "He that studies his content wants it." It seems to me even our grammars teach unselfishness; they tell us we must not say "I and you," but "you and I." That means you must put some other self before yourself.

IV.

TACT.

SOME people say tact is a special gift, but I incline to the opinion that all may have it in a degree, and that it may even be cultivated so that those who begin with little may end by being called "persons of great tact." It is closely allied to the unselfishness we talked about, but is not quite that. Indeed, the more I think of it, the more it seems to me it is living out the golden rule—doing unto others as we would have them do to us. It is that fine sense which puts ourselves in their places, enabling us to see just how we would like to be treated under similar circumstances.

You would not talk about the gallows to a man whose father was hung; that would not be tact, as anybody can see. But, my dears, it isn't tact, either, when you give yourselves airs because of any superiority of dress, or house, or accomplishment, in the presence of some other girl who has not your advantages. Indeed, I am afraid that is something worse

than want of tact; it is positively vulgar; yet I am afraid some of you have done it.

Let me tell you what President Tyler said to his daughter-in-law when she was about to preside at the White House: "You should always remember that nothing betrays a little soul so much as the exhibition of airs or assumptions under any circumstances." I might add that until one has grown old enough to be philosophical, there are few things which render one more uncomfortable than such assumptions by would-be superiors.

At a summer resort I once spent some weeks in a cottage where were gathered a variety of folk. One of the number was an old lady who had long passed her threescore years and ten. She was quite alone in the world, and was a bright, intelligent New England woman, if a bit old-fashioned. At this time she had a painful cough, which seemed as if it would tear her in pieces, and was distressing to hear. In her quaint way she called it her "chronic," and talked about her "bronchial" tubes. Her room was at one end of the house, and mine at the other, so I was not much disturbed, else I might not have been more considerate than the rest. One day she came to me after an especially hard

night, bringing a little old copy of "Gold Dust," and said: "I want to give you this book as a thank-offering, for I believe you are the only person in this house who hasn't complained of my cough. One says, 'How hard you did cough last night; it kept me awake.' Another asks me if I couldn't suppress it if I tried. It is my cross"—with the tears in her old eyes. I demurred, but she insisted, and with her trembling hand wrote on the fly-leaf my name and her own, and the words: "A thank-offering." I felt it was undeserved, but the book lies on my table now, and teaches me sweet lessons. The others were kind and well-meaning; some of them had tried to be sympathetic, but they had not considered what it would be to take her place; they had not used tact.

Tact knows when to speak and when to be silent; when to act and when to do nothing. Tact is touch in its first definition—that most sensitive of senses. The blind man passes his fingers over your face and tells how you look; so tact touches hearts and souls, and through that touch knows their likeness, and what will help or hurt them.

Now, my girls, do you wonder why I wish you to have it? Not only to make you more

agreeable, but because without it you will do very little good in the world. Good people without it are apt to be great blunder-heads; but with it, whatever be the difference of circumstances, you can always approach others on the ground of a common humanity.

Do you remember St. Paul said, "I am made all things to all men"? That did not mean any sacrifice of principles; it was genuine tact. Do you suppose it cost him no pains-taking? But he took the pains for the very reason each of us ought to do the same, "That I might by all means save some."

V.

CURIOSITY.

YOU and I are Eve's daughters, and that with many persons is as much as to say, we have curiosity. There have been no end of jokes made about the indulgence of this propensity by our first mother, and sorry jokes they are, too, in my opinion, considering all the sin and grief that have come into the world in consequence.

But there are two kinds of curiosity; or, rather, there are two ways of using what is really a most useful and praiseworthy gift. I would not like to look into your fresh young faces and see no curiosity in them; that would be the same as saying there was no intelligence, no mind there. Without it, no learned man would ever have searched out the secrets of science, no astronomer swept the heavens with his telescope, no explorer gone to the Arctic seas; without it, not one of you school-girls would take a genuine interest in her lessons. So remember that curiosity is some-

thing to be used when it is turned upon right subjects, and when those are subjects which you have a right to look into.

I am free to own, however, that the word is oftenest spoken in its unpleasant sense, and when we say such a person is very curious we picture to ourselves a meddlesome, prying individual. There is a sacredness about the personal affairs of others which should keep us from trying to look into them, except in those cases where we can be of use, and then a true delicacy will point out a way far removed from this obnoxious one.

But I want you to remember there is a curiosity of eye, as well as of speech, which is often the more disagreeable of the two. You can, if you are quick-witted, parry an inquisitive question, but there is little defence from inquisitive eyes. Let me tell you about a woman who comes into my mind as an illustration. When I meet her I am sure she knows every article of dress I wear; when she enters my room her glance takes in its entire contents. Now you may say that is due to her cultivated power of observation. Perhaps you will recall how Agassiz (I think it was) increased that power by looking into a crowded shop window each day as he passed, and then

repeating the articles he remembered, until at last one glance was sufficient for him to know all. But this is different, for the look of the person I write of, brings a sense of scrutiny and of disparagement. I am not only conscious she has seen all, but if there is any defect she has seen that a little more clearly than anything else. She is not a great talker, but she asks pointed questions ; if I am sad from any cause she lets me know she has observed it, and probably assigns some unpleasant reason for my depression. In short, she makes me feel as if I was on a dissecting table. So far as I know she is a lady, but I wouldn't trust her alone in my room, I should be afraid for my letters !

I grant there are not many such ; it is not often so many phases of a disagreeable trait meet in one person. I would not have my girls like that. You do not wish others to feel as if they must put on defensive armor the moment you appear. Perhaps I ought to guard you against flying to the other extreme of cool indifference, though that is not a common fault in young people. There is a kindly interest in others, growing out of a good heart, which only seeks to know enough to help and sympathize, which tries to see what is praise-

worthy, which tries not to see what another would hide.

It is interesting to notice how the qualities we have been discussing run into and overlap each other. We saw that tact was closely related to unselfishness, and by this time your bright minds will catch the thought, that tact will show you the distinction between a proper and an improper curiosity. The kind which looks into and questions about things, or principles, or public events, is usually right; that which peers uninvited into a private life is usually idle and wrong.

VI.

COURAGE.

IN one of her charming books, Mrs. Ewing tells this wise little story: "That Father in God who bade the young men to be pure, and the maidens brave, greatly disturbed a member of his congregation, who thought that the great preacher had made a slip of the tongue. 'That the girls should have purity and the boys courage, is what you would say, good Father?' 'Nature has done that,' was the reply, 'I meant what I said.'"

You will see the truth of the words, I am sure. Nature has not made you, in every sense, as brave as your brothers, therefore you will do well to gain all you can in that direction, from habit and education. Now somebody throws up her hands in dismay, and cries, "She wants us to grow up to be forward and unwomanly!" Not a bit of it. There is a vast difference between true courage and unseemly boldness, and I beg you not to indulge the notion that it will make you interesting to be afraid of everything. The chances are that

it would make you silly nuisances. I don't think I am writing to girls who would put on airs of that sort.

But I am writing to those who, from constitution or temperament, or condition of nerves, or the thousand and one things which go to make up physical and mental habits, have great need of good advice on this point. I venture to say that some of you are afraid in the dark, afraid to sit alone of an evening, afraid to see suffering, and a host of other things, to say nothing of imaginary forebodings, which are often the torment of life.

Will you believe me if I tell you such things are largely under your own control? A little will-power exerted now when you are young, with a persistent resolve to conquer, will bring the victory in most cases, and you will grow up into calm, self-reliant, useful women. For the time will come when you will be obliged to stay alone; when you must minister to the suffering; when you must see the dying; unless you choose to shirk the most sacred duties of life.

I know there is a high moral courage which does every duty, even though with quivering, shrinking nerves. But would it not be better if the nerves did not quiver and shrink? would

it not be better if the woman could work without suffering equal to that which she ministers unto? It is because I know something of this kind of endurance, that I wish you may be spared it.

I can't help thinking parents are somewhat to blame; not yours, or yours, my dear, but the parents of some other girl. I have often thought a child should be trained to fear nothing but sin.

A little girl of five or six was in a railway carriage with her mother when a violent thunder-storm came up. The darkness which blotted out the day was terrible; the vivid lightning and the crashing thunder were more terrible still. The frightened child, nestling close in the encircling arm, whispered, "Don't you think we will be killed, mamma?" The mother said, "We could not live a moment, Anna, if God did not keep us, and He is just as well able to keep us now in the midst of a storm, as in pleasant weather." Was it not a wise answer? She could not say truthfully, "I know we shall not be killed," but she did put a great truth into her reply; and the little one, comforted by the sense of our Heavenly Father's care, forgot her fears. I commend the incident to you, girls, as showing the true source of courage.

Did you ever notice the many times in the Bible that we are told to "Fear not"? Look them up, please. It would seem as if God knew what would be one of our chief tendencies, and then was so kind as to tell us over and over, "Be strong and of a good courage."

VII.

SPEECH.

"SPEECH is silver, silence is golden," is a proverb you may have heard. Well, that depends. Your brothers, if they read this, may suggest that, being girls, you must talk. Though you would not admit it to them, a certain inner consciousness may tell you it is the truth, and if it is, it naturally follows that you ought to talk well. There is so much to suggest concerning this, I foresee it will need two letters; so the next one will be on conversation, or I might call this "How to talk," and the next, "What to talk about."

You will say, "I know how to talk. I am neither a baby nor a deaf mute. I have all the organs of speech." True, but stop a moment. You have heard a great deal, doubtless, about cultivating the voice, and have always associated that with singing. Perhaps you do not sing well, though I trust you do—well enough to join in our beautiful, helpful hymns of worship. But I wish you to think how much

more the voice is used in ordinary speech than in song, and that it is quite as necessary it should be pleasing in tone for the first as for the last.

I hear you say: "There are no teachers; girls go to vocalists to be trained to sing." So they do, but you can teach yourself to speak musically, if you will take thought about it. There is one quotation I wish each of you would learn: "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low,—an excellent thing in woman." Do not confuse a low voice with an indistinct one. On the contrary, it can be clear and far-reaching, like a sweet-toned bell. Cultivate the quiet, gentle tones, and not the high, shrieking ones.

Of course you all know how anger, discontent, peevishness, and the like betray themselves in the voice, but I am writing to girls who are trying to put away such bad things out of their hearts.

We come now to another side of the subject, which I may put in this form: To talk well, you must attend to grammar and pronunciation. Your nominatives and verbs, your nouns and adjectives, must agree, and you must pay especial heed to contractions. It will not do to say "Those kind of things," or "He don't" for "He does not." I sup-

pose you will think, "These are trifling mistakes; what does it matter if I do make them?" Well, it would not matter so much if you slipped them off with your girlhood, but if not corrected now they will cling to you through life. Many intelligent women, whose later years have brought them advantages hitherto denied, betray by just such trips as these the lack of early cultivation.

I often think a good dictionary is one of the best educators. Indeed, I know a lady who was confined to her home by many years of invalidism. Partly as a recreation to while away the weary hours, she looked the dictionary over and over, studied pronunciation, learned the use of synonyms, compared words with words to discover the nicest shades of meaning, until she became noted among her friends for her purity of speech.

Perhaps you begin to question what all this has to do with the kind of life these letters are intended to touch upon. I will tell you. It is always right to be right; and right speech is a power for good. There is no one over whom you will have less influence because of it, and over most persons it will largely increase your influence. It is a mistake to suppose that Christians who use rude, incorrect language

have more power over others in consequence ; their power is rather in spite of their mistakes.

Let me give you one illustration of my meaning. I once heard a woman, a returned missionary, speak to an audience of men and women. She had spent years in the foreign field, and had done noble work. Perhaps the long use of a barbarous tongue was the cause, but she did not speak the Queen's English quite as the best grammars teach it. Oddly enough, her remarks were in the interest of a higher education in heathen lands. One could not avoid noticing the incongruity. A clergyman who was in entire sympathy with the work said to me : " One who cannot speak English better than that ought not to talk on such a subject. It is actually prejudicial to the cause."

Now, girls, I would not have you too fastidious, nor too critical of others ; but you see what the lesson is—watch for your own trippings ; criticise yourselves.

VIII.

CONVERSATION.

MY last letter was too long to admit one or two hints which should have come into it. Let me give them here. It is said that American girls are especially inclined to slang and to extravagance of expression. I will only say that the first of these is vulgar and the second approaches untruthfulness. (Just now I heard a girl say, "I am dying for a pair of slippers.")

Conversation in its usual acceptation is between two or more, and implies that you should be a good listener. You should give the others a chance. A girl who talks on and on in a steady stream soon becomes tiresome, even if she talks well.

What shall we talk about? It would be worse than useless to mention subjects; their name is legion. Perhaps it would be easier to take the other side: What shall we not talk about? Every rule has its exceptions, so that it is safe to say, do not talk about your-

self or your neighbors. You know the disagreeable boasters among the boys and girls. Some of us have met really great men whose egotism almost overshadowed their greatness. If it becomes necessary to speak of self, do it as quietly and modestly as possible, and if you must speak of your neighbors, be sure you do it kindly. A story is told of an old lady whose habit of kind speech was so well known that it was declared she would have something good to say even of the devil. And, to be sure, when he was berated in her presence, she said, "We would all do well to imitate his perseverance." There is no one so bad in whom you cannot pick out a good trait, and it is better to be absolutely silent than to speak evil. You will find a text on that very point so positive that it may well be considered a command.

Still less should you talk of the private affairs of others, no matter in what way you come to know them; nor should you impute motives, or wonder why one does this or that. I would have my girls guard especially against any tendency to gossip. You will not always be as now—in the shelter of your own homes. Remember that the things which it may be perfectly discreet and right to speak of to your mothers, or to the sisters who are your

second selves, it would be most unwise and harmful to say to outsiders.

You will not live many years without seeing persons bitterly grieved, and even lives blighted, and trace these sad results to idle talk. I know of nothing, indeed, which narrows and belittles the mind more than gossip.

Let me impress on you that habits of talk are formed as easily and imperceptibly as any habits. The golden rule comes in here also. The thought, "Would I like this said about myself, or about my brother, or my friend?" would check many unkind remarks.

What about fun and merry-making? With all my heart, if they hurt no one. Some persons think the text about "foolish talking and jesting" was meant to stop all fun. I cannot believe so; but, as the connection shows, only that which is coarse and low. They forget that the Bible also says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." In a world where there is much sorrow, and illness, and depression, I would cultivate merriment, but I would restrain the cutting repartee which hurts because it cuts.

What was said about proper subjects of curiosity might be repeated in regard to conversation; talk about public events, nature, science, this wonderful world.

Dear girls, I would not close this letter without another hint. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Always such as a Christian's ought to be, and sprinkled with words which will show to whose family you belong. Not words dragged in from a sense of duty, but coming naturally, because they are "out of the abundance of the heart."

How many days do you think you would be with friends and not mention your father and mother, your brothers and sisters? There is a Heavenly Father and an elder Brother. There is a beautiful verse which I like to repeat: "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." What a wonderful reward for right speaking!

IX.

READING.

IT was an original reply once given me by a lady who was too ill to read much, and yet showed great intelligence in conversation. I said, "How do you manage it?" and she answered, "I pick other people's brains."

The following incident was told me by a friend: "A woman called on us one morning who was to deliver a lecture the same evening. On the table lay a new book which just then attracted much attention. She had not read it, and we had. She led us on to talk of it by a few adroit questions, and that evening in her lecture she alluded to it in such a manner as to leave no doubt in the minds of the audience that she had mastered its contents." She too had "picked other people's brains." I don't deny that in this busy world there is some excuse for such a shortening process as this. We cannot read everything, and must be satisfied on many subjects to get here and there a thought. It is true now as

in Solomon's time, that "of making many books there is no end." I say it reverently, it seems to me one of the joys of the eternal life, that when time shall be no longer there will be time for all that study and research we have wished for here.

But, girls, you may be assured you must read thoroughly and well at first to know how to skim the cream in later years. I do not propose to make out a list for you to follow. You cannot have read the newspapers for months past without seeing the titles of the several "hundred books" preferred by different distinguished men. They show us that no person can decide positively for another, yet they are all helpful as suggestions.

I wish you to form a taste for the best, and that can only be done by reading the best. History and biography and travel are now made as interesting as romance; the natural sciences have long since ceased to be dry, and it will be great gain to you if you read somewhat in the line of your studies.

I know you are longing to ask what I think about fiction. Well, my dears, I don't expect ever to be too old to enjoy a good story. But let novels be your cake and sweetmeats, not your constant food, and let them be of

the fine and wholesome sort. For there is a dissipation of mind which weakens it for any stronger diet. I remember once reading stories until I was startled to find I couldn't read anything else; nothing else would hold my attention. Fortunately I resolved this must be stopped; I would read history for at least thirty minutes every day, and so the habit was broken. I cannot look back to my school-days without gratitude to a teacher who took me in hand, and to whom is largely due whatever liking I have for good literature. He introduced me to Scott and Dickens, and in poetry I recall how he feared I would like Moore and Byron; and how he assured me that an impure fountain could not send forth sweet waters.

As you grow older, I venture to say some books will become your friends, and you will read them over and over as long as you live. How important, then, that they should be good friends, wise friends.

You read your Bible every day, I doubt not, but perhaps you do so thinking of it only as the guide to the blessed eternal life. It is that, first and foremost, making the way so plain that none need wander from it. But you will miss part of the benefit if you do not

see that its history is the oldest, its laws the best, its science the truest, its poetry the grandest as well as the sweetest, its whole literature the most ennobling and refining. It is the one Book of which we may speak in superlatives.

I can wish no better wish for my girls than that their minds may be moulded by its teachings, and their hearts pervaded by its spirit.

X.

THINKING.

THE longer I write to you, the more real and personal you seem to me. I catch myself thinking of your varying expressions, and in imagination watch the play of mind upon your faces. One is breaking into a smile; the fun just ripples and breaks all over. One has sad eyes; another looks abstracted or anxious. I could wish we might play the old childhood game, "A penny for your thoughts," and so I could get a peep inside at the real you.

It almost takes one's breath away to think about thought. How these busy minds of ours work on and on, never ceasing for an instant in our waking hours, and when we sleep it is "perchance to dream." Try to stop thinking—you cannot do it; necessity is laid upon you—you must think.

No wonder that such a ceaseless force within should have the greatest influence on your lives; no wonder the Bible should go farther

than that, and say: "As a man thinketh in his heart, *so is he*." That looks as if we might be responsible for what we think about, doesn't it? It looks as if to be right ourselves we must have right thoughts.

I fancy the puzzled expression of your faces as the question comes back to me, "How can I help myself? Thought is quicker than lightning; it flashes in and out without my choice." True, girls, but it does not stay in without your choice. An old, quaint answer is this: "I cannot hinder the birds from flying over my head, but I can hinder their stopping to make nests in my hair." That secret power called will can do a great deal in this matter.

I think I can make it plain to you. Suppose you have a difficult lesson to learn at school. You sit idly at your desk, letting your attention wander to the dress of some other girl, or thinking of the picnic you will have next Saturday. When recitation comes you fail miserably and get marked for it, but it doesn't occur to the teacher, or to yourself even, that any one is to blame except yourself. You know perfectly well you could have concentrated your thoughts upon the lesson and mastered it; in point of fact, let us say, you

usually do so. It was a simple question of will, or, if you prefer it, of choice. You are clever enough to apply this principle to the thronging thoughts which will come trooping into your minds every day of life.

When you remember that what you read will do you little good unless you think it over, you will see one important phase of this subject. Still more: when you reflect that thought determines character; that to think of silly, frivolous things will make you silly; to think of high and noble things will make you noble; and also that there was never a low, impure, sinful deed but originated in a bad thought; never a good, pure, kindly act but had its birth in a good thought—then I am sure you will realize how much the quality of your thinking has to do with your own happiness and usefulness. We do not sufficiently value the importance of this tendency.

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Philippians iv. 8, and mark the passage: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Accustom yourselves to bring your thoughts to this test; to try them by this standard. See how it will modify and render kindly your judgment of others, when you search for things of good report, when you remember that "love thinketh no evil"; see how it will put away from you whatever is unworthy or ignoble, and turn you toward all that is pure and good.

Believe me, the expression "habits of thought" is no misnomer. Nothing is easier than to let the mind drift in an idle, aimless fashion, till concentrated thought is next to impossible; and few things are better worth striving for than the ability to think to good purpose.

XI.

MANNERS.

“MANNERS maketh man.” “There is always a best way of doing anything, even if it be only to boil an egg. Manners are the happy ways of doing things.”

I like these much-in-little sayings. Now, girls, I am not writing letters on etiquette; I am only giving hints which I wish may help you to make the best of yourselves. As I wrote the words “manners maketh man,” I thought that, even more, manners maketh woman. So many things are comprised in them; probably not one subject has been discussed in these letters but has its part in their formation.

Just here I would like to say a little on what you may think a minor point, namely, attitude. In “Farmer Tompkins and his Bibles,” Professor Beecher gives an entertaining account of the old farmer who had married a “school-ma’am.” She took his rude speech and uncouth ways in hand, and by private

agreement, when he tripped in his English she was to say one, two, or three "Thistles," as the case might be; if he tilted his chair or used his fork for a toothpick, she said "Stumps," at which he promptly corrected himself.

Ah! girls, how often, when I have seen you or your seniors striding along in a conspicuous way, lounging in public places, sitting with knees crossed, or in any other mannish attitude, I have wished I might cry "Stumps!" I recall a young lady of good family, but not of brilliant parts, and never forgot the remark made about her by a very cultivated woman. She said: "Mary is not a bit clever, but she doesn't talk much, and she never assumes an unladylike attitude, so I am never ashamed of her." A little thing, I know, but it goes to make up the great sum of influence.

I am not ignorant that there is a conventional polish; that fine manners sometimes cover base characters; but it ought not so to be. They ought to be the outward expression of what is refined, unselfish, and noble within. To go into this would be to discuss all that is sincere and thorough in us.

What I wish you to take into your thoughts is this: that good breeding is largely Christian

living. One of the most thorough gentlemen I have ever known was a Christian minister who had been a country lad, and whose entire ministerial life was spent in an obscure, rural parish. But he had the fine courtesy, the nice sense of the rights of others, the noble humility which took the low seat until asked to come up higher. In a word, he was a gentleman because he lived out the Bible teaching. Have you not read where it says, "Be courteous," "In honor preferring one another," "Not strive, but be gentle, patient," and many other passages like them? Probably you did not think of their bearing on this subject. We so often read the Bible carelessly, and lose the practical, every-day lessons. There is no standard of courtesy better than is contained in it.

I am sure St. Paul was a real gentleman. What exquisite tact he showed in his speech before Agrippa, and in the opening of the address on Mars' Hill. And how ready he was to apologize when he had spoken in a wrong way to the high-priest.

My dear girls, do not mistake me. The last thing in the world I want for you is to be feminine prigs; or those proper individuals who have just said "prunes and prisms," and are afraid of getting their mouths out of

pucker. Be natural. Is it another paradox to say, cultivate naturalness? No, it is only saying cultivate the sweetness, purity, and unselfishness which ought to be in every girl's heart; I mean in every heart which has been washed in the Saviour's blood. Let all graces of manner be their outward expression, for thus shall you honor the King whose daughters you are.

"This is to my lady's praise;
Shame before her is shamed;
Hate cannot hate repeat.
She is so pure of ways
There is no sin is named
But falls before her feet;
Because she is so frankly free,
So tender, and so good to see,
Because she is so sweet."

XII.

DRESS.

IN the wealth of color which bursts on us as we look on a summer landscape, we see what pains God has taken to give to our earth a beautiful dress. We can conceive a state of things where the eye would be constantly pained by the sight of ugliness, but it is now far otherwise. May we not believe that our Father loves the beautiful, and loves to provide for the adorning of His works? We know our Saviour was not indifferent to it, since He used the glory of the lilies to point some of His most precious sayings. Nor were those words about "wherewithal ye shall be clothed" directed against the kind of thought we are to talk of, but rather against that anxiety concerning temporal care, which is not seemly in a child of our Heavenly Father.

I cannot think that when the apostle wrote as he did about "plaiting the hair," wearing "jewels of gold," or "putting on apparel," he meant to say you must never dress your hair in

pretty ways, or wear a keepsake, or try to have your gown becoming. No; I think he meant to teach that these things were of little value as compared to the adornment of a "meek and quiet spirit." You may have every attraction of dress, but if you give your attention to that only, you are like a paste diamond in a rich setting—you have no value.

Some Christians have read these passages with great literalness. When, as a child, I came to the Saviour, I remember some one said that I couldn't be a Christian, because an innocent little spray of artificial flowers bloomed modestly under my bonnet's brim. I would gladly have torn it out in my young zeal, but my wise mother explained that trust in Christ was not dependent upon such things. Indeed, a larger experience teaches me that there may be quite as much vanity in plain clothing as in the gayest attire.

I have written enough on this point to show you that while your dress should not occupy the chief place in your thoughts, it must have some attention, and the wish to look pretty is not sinful. Now just a few suggestions. I don't forget that I am writing to all sorts and conditions of girls; that my letters go to rich and poor, to the kitchen and the drawing-room.

So I say, let your dress be suitable ; do not wear a party dress in the morning, nor a silk dress to wash dishes in ; no laces and ornaments in the cars ; nor anything flashy anywhere. It has been said that in a public place a lady is best dressed when you cannot tell what she has on.

It follows that as a rule you avoid conspicuous colors for outdoor wear ; especially choose quiet shades if your purse will not allow many changes. Dress modestly ; dress healthfully ; in these days there are plenty of systems for that. Avoid extremes of fashion. I had nearly forgotten to say (what indeed ought not to be necessary), that dress must be always neat and whole. I can think of nothing more incongruous than an untidy girl. The two words ought never to be joined. A girl's dress ought to be always sweet, clean, dainty. I recall one friend in particular. I care not where you found her ; washing dishes in her kitchen, working among her flowers, entertaining in her parlor, she was always neat, always suitably dressed ; there was no time nor place where she did not look " every inch a lady."

We are apt to look upon rich, handsomely dressed girls and imagine their apparel must have occupied all their thoughts, but the fact is the girl who has less money is the one who

must give the thought, since she must plan, and contrive, and piece out. Let the care you must give to your clothes be beforehand. Once dressed, forget all about them. You may be a fine bird if you seem conscious of fine feathers, but you will not grow into a self-respecting woman whose best care is for herself, rather than for her outward adornments.

Is this a disappointing letter, girls? Did you think when you opened it I would tell you about the latest styles? I wanted rather to give you some thoughts which will be helps always, some fashions which will never go out.

XIII.

MONEY.

YOU may be surprised to get a letter on this subject, but I regard the right use of money as one of the most important lessons a girl can learn. I can fancy the different thoughts which will come to you as you read that sentence. Perhaps a few of you can say truthfully, "I wish I had any money to use"; the majority will think they would gladly have more; and a few others will toss their heads gayly as they remember that they have only to ask in order to get any reasonable sum that they wish. I feel more solicitude for this last class than for the first, because they are in such danger of growing up hard and selfish, with no sympathy for the privations and wants they have never experienced. They will be too apt to throw away money just for personal gratification, forgetting that it is lent of God, and that some time He will ask how it has been used.

Girls, have you ever read this quaint prayer?

"Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me ; lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, who is the Lord?—or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Evidently one man was wise enough to ask for the right thing ; to see that it was better to pray for just enough than for too much. Doubtless, as I said at the start, the most of you are in this safer place, neither very rich nor very poor ; but wherever you are, in that respect you are not now responsible for it ; you are where God has placed you. What you have to do now is to learn in little ways the value and right use of money, so that when the time of responsibility does come, you will be ready.

I don't forget that money with young girls is a very variable quantity, depending largely upon the indulgence or caprice of others. I believe if those parents who like so well to gratify you could know what a pleasure it would be, they would grant you each an allowance. Some girls could be trusted to buy everything they need from clothing to candy ; and every one of you would be the better for having an allowance of spending-money, if it was not more than five cents a week ; but your very own, to do with exactly as you

please, and account to your own conscience for it. I think, girls, I should do a little coaxing, a little special pleading, to accomplish this, if I were you. Some of you know the pleasure of earning what you have: a real pleasure it often is.

But however it comes, the first thing in a practical way is to keep a cash account. It is very simple; your father or brother will teach you how, and the time comes too quickly to most of us when such a habit is of great importance. Balance the account at least once a month, and know where all the dimes go. Where shall they go? Well, I cannot say just what proportion shall be spent for trinkets, and gifts, and candy, and books, and concerts, and all the numberless things which a girl wants. But I can give you a truth to start upon which will prove a safe rule; whether you have little or much, it is not yours, but God's, and you ought not to use any of it without asking Him, and some definite part should always be used for Him. There is a plain direction given us to "lay by in store as God has prospered." That is not only for the girl who has, say, five dollars a week to spend; it is as well for one who has only five cents a week.

You see, girls, I wish you to grow up not only to use money wisely and prudently for yourselves, but to have the joy of dispensing blessings with it to others. And this joy the poorest of you may have. Do you know why the great causes of benevolence and religion do not get on faster? Well, I can tell you what I see, and what our great religious papers say. They say it is not because the American people are penurious; they are the most free-handed in the world; but it is because they spend so much on themselves. As fast as they grow rich their wants increase, and many of them gratify themselves first, leaving what they give away to a haphazard impulse. The trouble is they didn't begin right; it was self first, and God's cause last, when it ought to have been the reverse.

I know one family (and there are many such—more and more every year, thank God!) who used the one-tenth plan. They were by no means rich. The mother, a widow, kept a cash account, one page headed, "The Lord's Money," the opposite page, "Expenditures." No matter how small the sum that came to her, the tenth was taken from it; if only a dollar, ten cents went down to the Lord's Money. You see, it made giving very easy. When any

call came, she had only to run up the account to see if there was money in readiness.

I know of no better suggestion than this: to lay by a certain proportion. I do not say what it shall be for you; but for myself, if I had only ten cents a month, I think twelve cents a year should go to help some one else.

XIV.

W O R K .

IN these days when everything is organized and classified, we hear a great deal about brain work, hand work, heart work, man's work, woman's work. When one who lives a secluded life goes out into the world, perhaps the strongest impression is of doing, doing, doing. This is quite right. There is much work to be done, and I trust each of you may "lend a hand."

But there are two kinds of work so distinctly feminine, it is worth while to talk of them a little before we say anything about the so-called wider spheres. Since the first home was set up they have been necessary, and it is safe to say their mission will not be ended so long as there are homes on earth. Whatever a woman may do outside, house-work and needle-work will be necessary occupations. Therefore, my girls, it is scarcely extravagant to say, if you expect to lead happy, useful lives, you must know how to do these. Such

knowledge is the oil which smooths all friction in the domestic machinery.

To many of you it is no new thing to do house-work. In our free land, where there are few class distinctions, many families by no means poor keep no domestics. The work is divided between mother and daughters, perhaps with a weekly visit from the "Madonna of the Tubs." Girls in such homes, do not envy your more idle sisters, but think now, as you surely will farther on, what a beautiful education it is.

I well know some will say, "We have servants, there is no need for me to work"; and think, if you do not say it, "It is beneath me." Now, I have a great deal of patience with such things, because, in girls like you who really wish to be sensible, they only show immaturity; you will think differently by and by. All your short lives you have felt no jar in the household. Every day, breakfast and dinner and supper have followed each other in endless round as unconsciously to you as if the Irish fairies below-stairs had been under a magician's wand; and so they have—the magician's name is "Mother." Let long-continued absence or illness lay her aside, and you will see the difference. Because you will not

always have her—some day you may have your own home; some day the happiness of that home will depend on you; some day the fairies may flit without a month's notice—because of these things which most likely will come, get ready for them now. Learn now, so, if need be, you can bid defiance to the future Bridget, and hold peacefully on your way, secure in knowing “how to bake and how to brew,” and never, never think such knowledge beneath a gentlewoman.

I doubt not the word needle-work seems more agreeable to you as ambitions to learn “Kensington” rise within you. But I use it in its larger sense—any work done with a needle. In these days of sewing-machines I fear my girls may not know much of it, except as embroidery. Yet I wish you might know how to cut, and make, and mend. There used to be a fine-art in mending. Pieces of table linen, almost heirlooms, have come down from my grandmother—the little worn places cut out round and filled in with the finest lace stitch. There are real laces mended so beautifully as to enhance their value. It is not very long either since I heard a father tell his daughter that she should have a ring when she could make a loaf of bread and a shirt.

In "The Marble Faun," Hawthorne has an exquisite passage on needle-work. It is too long to quote entire, but let me give one sentence: "Methinks it is a token of healthy and gentle characteristics, when women of high thoughts and accomplishments love to sew; especially as they are never more at home with their own hearts than when so occupied."

I can tell you, girls, many a man envies us the privilege. Is he ill, or weary in mind?—no light, pretty work may grow beneath his fingers, and charm dull care away. I knew one such man once; broken down by business cares, he could not sleep, he could not read; the physicians were at fault. As a last resource he learned needle-work, and actually wrought a beautiful embroidery for his wife's gown, and saved his own life as the result.

Turn now to the last chapter of Proverbs: read on from the tenth verse and see if you don't find something about woman's work there. Perhaps you have tried picking out birthday verses from this chapter. Let me tell you a secret—mine is the thirteenth; don't you think it is a good one, and do you wonder I like to write about work?

XV.

SERVICE.

IN the last letter we talked about work as it comes to most girls. You may think this word service is only another way of expressing the same thing. Not quite; all work is not service, and all service is not work. The little bell-boys who run on errands in hotels may sit near the office many minutes doing nothing, but they are serving, simply because they wait ready to jump at the first call. You may be surprised when I say that service seems to me higher than work, since it has in it an element of unselfishness; it must be for another, a doing or not doing which goes out of self.

Put it out of your minds at once that there is anything degrading in it. The domestic in the kitchen, if she does her work well, is worthy of your respect. She has not your education, your refinement, your advantages, but in her place she may be doing better than you are in yours.

Have you thought how this word service

runs up through all ranks, from the lowest to the highest? You would deem it an honor for your father to be minister to a foreign court; but a United States minister is a servant; that is the meaning of the word minister. You might not like to be a lady's maid, but titled ladies are glad to wait upon the Queen. I said the idea of service runs up through all the grades of life. Should I not rather say that it begins with the highest and descends through all? Our Saviour said, "I am among you as he that serveth." "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." In Bible times as now persons of all classes came to the Master, but then as now more of the poor than of the rich, and there are many passages telling them exactly how to serve. Especially they are told, "Do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men."

Old George Herbert has a stanza often quoted, but I dare say you have not all seen it. Of the words "For Thy Sake" he sings:

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that, and the action fine."

You know, girls, the better you love your mother the easier it becomes to do even un-

pleasant things because she wishes it ; it puts a higher motive into the doing. Carry this a step farther, and do all things " for the love of Christ," and you reach the freest, happiest life.

" In service which Thy will appoints
There are no bonds for me ;
My inmost heart is taught the truth
That makes Thy children free ;
A life of self-renouncing love
Is one of liberty."

This ought to be a very practical letter to you, as I don't see how you can live a day without service of some sort, and not be utterly selfish. Start out in the morning with the resolve that some one shall be the happier or the better to-day because you are alive. Look for opportunities, and they will not be wanting. Everywhere a kind act, a kind word, or even a kind look helps, and some life into which the rain is falling, will catch a glimpse of sunshine. Think what value Christ sets on little deeds, when He said even the giving of a cup of cold water should not lose its reward. Be willing to begin with small services which lie close at hand, then you will grow fit for large things. " He that is faithful in a very little, is faithful also in much." Render the service to-day ; it may not come to you

to-morrow. Remember, "I shall not pass this way again."

I do not forget that service sometimes means waiting. This letter goes to some who wait. It would be too bad if my girls who lie on sick-beds should find no word for them. There is no better thing in all the world than patiently to do His will. You have heard of the old woman who said: "The Lord speaks to me in the night and says, 'Cough, Becky; Cough, Becky,' and so I do cough to the glory of God." You may smile at the quaint speech, but it holds a brave truth.

"Yes, God loves patience; souls that dwell in stillness,

Doing the little things or resting quiet,
May just as perfectly fulfil their mission,
Be just as useful in the Father's sight."

XVI.

SPECIALTIES.

Do not be weary if I ask you to think about another phase of work. Because I have lived more years than you and know something of the emergencies of life, I should be glad if I might help you to meet them better when they arise. The wise old Jews taught each boy a trade; rich or poor, high or low, it didn't matter, each must learn a trade. So we read that St. Paul was a tent-maker, and he tells in more than one letter that he wrought with his own hands, and was not chargeable to anybody; a real, noble spirit of independence. I wish there was something of this sort for girls. I wish each of you would now take up some one pursuit, and become skillful in it. I don't care much what it is, only it would be better if it were something to which your taste points—music, painting, dressmaking, millinery, stenography. I might mention a hundred things girls may do now; some handiwork or some study which shall be your specialty, and

which has a marketable value. Do you ask what for? Because the time may come when you will need it. Riches take wings; especially in America. Fortune is a capricious goddess. Smiles to-day are frowns to-morrow. Fathers die; families are broken up; even nice, sweet girls like you, my dears, do not always marry; there is no getting away from the fact that some day the knowing how to do one thing thoroughly may make all the difference to you and yours, between comfort and absolute privation.

I have often felt that those who are to be pitied most are not the ones who have been always poor, but the many, many gentlewomen who have seen better days, whose delicacy will not let their needs be known—will not allow them to push for themselves, and who find too late that the world asks and will pay for only skilled labor. With a fair education they excel in nothing perhaps but homekeeping. Alas! they have no homes to keep now, or if they have, they depend on outside work for their continuance. I am not trying to draw a dismal picture. Do not forebode evil, but forestall it by an easy provision now.

There is another use for specialties scarcely less important. Some attainment thoroughly

mastered, even though no need arises of turning it to practical account, may do good as a recreation and as a refuge from sorrowful thought. You will hardly understand this yet, because thus far life has been full of joy. I dislike to say a word to throw a damper on it, and indeed I will not, if you look at it aright. In one sense, all life is a getting ready for life farther on, and for that there should be, not worry or fear, but wise forethought. I know at least one person who wishes some one had told her years ago just what I am telling you now.

Days of invalidism will come ; times of sorrow will come ; years, perhaps, when you must endure much. Then some one gift or taste is such a refuge. I have a friend who has been for many years too feeble to do any vigorous work ; her life left lonely because her dearest have entered the life beyond ; but she paints, and she loves flowers. I wish you could see her botany. She had one of Gray's larger works unbound, and bound again with many blank leaves scattered through. Summer by summer the pages grow crowded with her illustrations. Lovely sprays wander from the margins, and lightly droop upon, but do not obscure the print. Each new locality she

visits adds its treasures. The humblest wild-flower has its charms for her; her brush fixes its likeness, and then it is remorselessly pulled to pieces for analysis.

Every now and then she takes some sweet, uplifting poem, copies it on a card, and ties it with a ribbon, paints upon the cover the rose, or the forget-me-not, or the pansy, perhaps, with their messages of love, of remembrance, of thought, and sends the dainty token to some friend.

It has been God's way of bringing peace, comfort, and a quiet heart to one much tossed by grief.

XVII.

FRIENDSHIPS.

IF we did not know that there is a Providence over every life, it would seem as if nothing was left more to chance than the choice of friends. Especially with young girls, they can hardly be said to choose, friendships are so much a matter of association, popularity, or caprice. The school you attend, the class you are in, the table you sit at, may determine all. Very possibly you like another because some one else likes or doesn't like her; and I don't forget the sudden intimacy, the gush of confidence, and the estrangement as sudden. It would be useless to talk against these; they seem a part of girl-life, very real life while it lasts. Do I not remember well my first sorrow, when a child of eleven, when my bosom friend sickened and died? Had she lived, we might have drifted far apart; but now that little white memory always remains, my first glimpse of the open heaven and the children round the throne;

my first star, where there is now a constellation.

Most of you to whom I write are not so young as that; you are reaching the years when you do make some sort of choice, though now, as always, circumstance has much to do with it. I have heard a great deal of goody-goody talk to the effect that we ought to love everybody indiscriminately, as if that was the proper interpretation of the second command. I haven't much patience with what is simply an impossibility. I fall back with great satisfaction on the old mental philosophy distinctions, the love of benevolence and the love of complacency. The former you should have for every one; it will make you kind, unselfish, heedful of others' rights, benevolent, and in that sense a friend; but it is essentially different from the latter, which delights in the friend on her own account. We know our Saviour had at least four such special friends—Mary and Martha, and Lazarus and John. We know too that He set a sacred seal on friendship when He said, "I have called you friends." Do you remember the proof He gave? "For all things that I have heard from my Father, I have made known unto you." You see, then, as now, confidence was the test.

It would be an interesting study for you to search the Bible and find the number of times where friends are spoken of, and the various qualities by which they are distinguished. I think there must be scores of such passages.

Emerson says: "A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud." Yet as any truth may be pushed to its opposite extreme, and as young people incline to too great frankness, and as their choice is not guided by infallible wisdom, a word of caution is needed. "Thy friend has a friend; thy friend's friend has a friend; be discreet." While a frank, confiding nature is usually a noble one, there is a certain dignity of reserve which puts some thoughts and feelings under lock, and does not give away the key.

It is a happy thing if our friends are our superiors in goodness, or education, or manners, for by association we grow to be like them. You might think it would be a bad lookout for those who associate with you, if all should seek their superiors; but we are not alike, and you may excel in things which others lack, and thus mutual deficiencies are made up.

As you grow older the circle will narrow

somewhat. Some you will outgrow, some will drop out of the pathway; but those who remain will be more to you than tongue can tell. Some rare, sweet friendships will be given after you have reached life's meridian; all the more valuable because by that time you will know whom to like. I don't believe at all that, in a healthy nature, confidence and trust die out as time goes on. There are those whom no length of absence could estrange, no silence of years make forgetful. "The paths to a true friend lie straight, though he be far away."

And, my dears, one beautiful thing is, if only your choice has been wise, if your friends are of the right sort, that is, if they and you are friends of God, there need be no end to the dear relationship; it can be continued up there!

XVIII.

LETTER-WRITING.

IT is somewhat the fashion of the day to disparage letter-writing. It is true that the mails are crowded, that the increasing number of letters causes lower rates of postage, and the lower rates cause more letters to be sent ; but I am not speaking now of the business letters which fly to and fro ; neither have I quite in mind the epistles some of you write, in which the words stride over the paper in great masculine dashes whose largeness is not always legibility. Rather am I speaking of a certain fine art which some would-be practical people think ought to pass away. Lately quite an eminent teacher said something of that sort to me. She said she discouraged her girls in their wish to write letters ; she told them that in this busy rush of life there was so much to do that they must take the choice of doing the best things, and there were much better things to do than letter-writing. I ventured to reply that letter-writing seemed to me a

great educator, and that because this is a busy, rushing age, perhaps there was nothing girls needed more than training in the quiet, less showy accomplishments, which will go far to make them womanly women. Now and then one reads charming letters written by men ; nothing could be more delightful than those of Thackeray ; but, as a rule, women are the really graceful letter-writers. Nature makes them so. They are fond of details, and can usually express them in the vivid manner which gives picturesqueness to the common affairs of life. Therefore, girls, this seems to me one of the talents to be worked with, and to be accounted for, to our Master.

I know just as well as if I was so impolite as to peep over your shoulder, that the letter you are writing to-day to your dearest Blanche is somewhat silly, somewhat extravagant ; but if you give thought to the matter, the next ought to be better, and the next, and the next. Because I hope to make you think, I take this subject now.

I would be careful about putting too many confidences in letters ; talking secrets is bad enough, writing them is worse. I can remember a romantic young friend who used to ask me to " put a piece of my heart on paper and

send it to her." I thought that was such a beautiful sentence. Very likely I did exactly as she asked, and sent her what in those days I thought was a piece of my heart. You see, girls, how entirely I am in sympathy with you when I can recall such things; and yet, grown wiser now, I advise you not to do so. It is a good rule to be more reticent in letters, more discreet, than in speech. The spoken word may die with the breath; the written word may be immortal.

Now, I am far from wishing you to be stilted in writing. Our grandmothers tell of letters which began thus: "I take my pen in hand to inform you that I am in health, and hope these few lines will find you enjoying the same blessing." Eminently proper, but scarcely natural.

I would have you aim to be helpful and sympathetic. There will be times when you must write your pleasure in some great joy which has come to another; still more surely, when you must express sympathy in heavy sorrow. You will not only wish to do this, but it will be your most sacred duty. Some friend will need your courageous, uplifting word. How can you give it if you have neglected this talent? Still more, there is

hardly a better way to touch another whom you would lead to the Saviour. You can be wise in a letter; you can weigh the words; you can choose what will best influence another. No one can read such a life as Mrs. Prentiss's and not see the far-reaching spiritual power of letters. Dear girls, this is one of the more important means of giving pure pleasure, true sympathy, and real help.

I stop writing to read a letter just brought in. It is from an old lady of nearly eighty years, but with heart fresh and young. Full of vivid description, bright with humor, reverent with a sense of the care that has led her all these years—a delightful letter of eight pages, I say to myself: "When I am as old as she, may I be able to write like that, and show to others that 'age is a matter of feeling and not of years.'"

One last word to each of you; last, because most important; to be remembered if you forget all the rest. Never begin a correspondence without the approval of your mother or guardian.

XIX.

READING ALOUD.

ANOTHER pleasant accomplishment of the quiet sort which I hope you may have, is the ability to read aloud well. I do not allude now to what is usually termed elocution, in which too often naturalness is sacrificed to dramatic effect, when, as some one has said, the emphasis is scattered about in a sort of shotgun fashion in the effort to be striking. It may be well enough to recite before large numbers, but many of you will have no special gift or inclination that way. On the other hand, each one may some time be able to give great pleasure or add to the comfort of another by reading aloud. Reading, quietly, naturally, without gestures, in well-modulated tones, what a charming, womanly grace it is!

You might not think it, but a physician of large practice once told me that in many cases he knew of nothing more soothing and refreshing to his patients than the reading to them by some woman who had a sweet, sym-

pathetic voice. I myself had the following experience. A friend suddenly became totally blind. After having known for years and years this beautiful world of nature, having looked on the faces of friends, having enjoyed books with the keenest appreciation, suddenly all was darkened with a darkness never to be lifted in this life. No hope of relief; she knew that henceforth she must grope her way. Well, it was a very little thing for me with my eyes, with all the abundance open to me which was shut out from her, to go to her every day for an hour of reading. You should have seen her sad face brighten, you should have heard her thankful words as she told how the thoughts stayed with her, and charmed the long, darkened hours. Was not my "cup of cold water" rewarded at once? Indeed it was; what was begun as a duty became my daily pleasure, and is now one of the most grateful memories.

Now, girls, this might easily come to any one of you. There will always be the invalid or the blind, the children or the aged to whom reading aloud will be a beautiful ministry. Some day it may well happen that you may thus save a life from despair.

In the home, too, there are no happier hours

than when the lamps are lighted on a winter's night, and the fire glows, and the pleasant circle gather with work in hand, while the voice of mother or daughter leads all the others to enchanted ground. This is also most improving. The stopping to talk it over, the discussion of the thought expressed, the looking up of places, the friction of mind with mind, all are inspiring. The memory is quickened, and you retain far more when the words are fixed by the voice, as well as by the eye. To do this you must be a sympathetic reader; you must understand your author, and truly interpret him; for the time you must put yourself in his place. You must have the quick eye which glances to the end of the sentence as you begin it, and grasps its meaning at the glance.

You will agree with me that other practice is needed besides what you get in school. Let me suggest a course at once possible and delightful. Read aloud with some one friend. Select a book you both wish to know, and read alternately. Let the dictionary lie open, and when there is doubt as to the meaning or pronunciation of a word, stop at once and look it up. You must be very good-natured about it, and sincerely desirous to improve, and not too

sensitive about mistakes, or you will be impatient of criticism. But this course persisted in, will become a great pleasure and a great benefit.

I am sure my girls who aim to give happiness cannot think over the suggestions of this letter without regarding reading aloud as another "opportunity."

XX.

INFLUENCE.

HAVE you ever thought what power there is in silent things? What would you say is one of the irresistible forces in the universe? Something which works unceasingly and never makes the slightest sound; something which opens flowers, and expands metals till they crack, yet touches all things with the same silent, gentle touch. Why, sunlight, of course. They tell us that Bunker Hill Monument is taller at noon of a summer's day than in the morning, because this silent force has lifted it.

There is a fable that a traveller once walked along with his cloak wrapped about him. The Sun and the Wind laid a wager as to which could make him throw off the cloak. The Wind tried first, and suddenly rose from a gentle zephyr to a roaring, crashing tempest, but though the cloak was like to be torn into shreds the traveller only wrapped it the closer, and held it the tighter to protect himself from the storm. Then the Sun smiled a little,

peeping through the clouds as the Wind withdrew discomfited, and at the smile the traveller loosened his grasp a bit ; then the Sun smiled broader and broader till all its rays beat down on the pilgrim, and he was fain to cast aside the cloak. The silent force had won. You can think of many other forces which have no speech nor language ; without these their voice is heard. Such is the dew ; such are the attractions and repulsions which bind the worlds together, and yet send them swinging in their orbits. If there is a " music of the spheres " our ears are not yet attuned to hear it.

Now, girls, there is in every life, yours and mine and every other, a silent power as potent in the moral world as these are in the physical. I should call it unconscious influence ; that subtle something which comes from character, and which we wield for good or bad because we are ourselves intrinsically good or bad. One who was dear to me often used this expression in prayer, " Whatever else Thou dost deny, grant us the silent influence of a consistent Christian life." The prayer was answered to a remarkable degree, in long years full of sweet, beneficent power.

" The blessing of her quiet life
Fell on us like the dew ;

And good thoughts, where her footsteps pressed,
Like fairy blossoms grew."

Let her petition be yours, dear girls.

But there is a conscious influence as well. The time comes—must have come already to each—when you must consciously take sides for the right. You remember in the Tom Brown books little Arthur's first night at Rugby, when in that roomful of jeering boys he knelt in prayer, and how Tom tried it next morning, though it cost him much quaking and he had no idea what he prayed for, and how the example spread from room to room. Little Arthur had cast his pebble into that sea of boy life, and the ripples widened and widened till the whole expanse was stirred. I venture to say the very same thing has happened to some of you, at least I can remember when it took every particle of my own courage to say my prayers in the presence of some girl who had not the habit, and, alas! sometimes I played the coward.

The days will come when you must give your word on vital questions, such as temperance, purity, and the like. You must refuse to smile when religion is made a jest or the Bible treated with irreverence. You must be ready to say by word and look, quietly but fearlessly, "I am a Christian."

Now, I do not say this is always easy. There is something in you, if you are sensitive, which strongly desires the approval of others, which likes to be in harmony with them. But where right is concerned you must be brave, and remember that gentleness can be very firm. I will tell you a secret, too, which you would find out for yourselves if you were older. Every one of those whose opinions you so dread to oppose, at heart will respect and admire you more for your steadfastness.

You can better estimate your influence over others by considering their influence over you. Think how many things you do from day to day because some one else does the same, or to please some one, or to make some one like you. In like manner they look to you. Then see the outreach of it ; because you do so your friend does the same ; because she does it one more does, and so on—you cannot get to the end.

Pray, my dears, for the character which makes the unconscious influence right ; pray also to be “by constant watching wise,” not taken unawares, but ready to exert the conscious influence when occasion requires.

XXI.

MISSIONS.

WHEN I was as young a girl as you, or you, or you—whichever, Mary, or Helen, or Bess, is now reading this letter—girls did not know so very much about missions. It was a chance if their mothers did, for it is only in these later years that women have come into their rights. And I am sure no one will object if we claim such a kind of woman's right as that; the right to work for our Master in behalf of other women and girls. Ignorance wasn't so much of a shame then as it is now. Nowadays, people in Christian homes are not considered very well informed if they are ignorant about such things.

Mrs. Bainbridge tells an amusing story of some ladies engaged in conversation. Another, and a New England woman at that, who wished to join them, said: "I don't quite catch what you are talking about; I have heard of telegraphs and telephones, but what are telugus?" (with a small "t"!) Now, I

dare say every one of you knows something about the wonderful missionary work among the Telugus, even if you do not know just where on the great map of the world these people live.

Another amusing incident is told of a woman on the cars. In the seat before her two were talking about zenana work. Every now and then the word floated to her ear, till she could resist no longer, and, leaning forward, she asked, "Is it anything like Kensington stitch?" It is difficult to believe such things are true; but their lesson is, if you would not be considered very ignorant, you must know about missions. You don't take interest in things, either, unless you know about them.

I suppose most of you belong to one or other of the girls' societies which are springing up in all our churches, at least I trust you do. Now, my dears, don't let this be a matter of enthusiasm, only to die out when the novelty is over; let it be a principle that you are to work for missions as long as you live. It is an old story (but if stories are only old enough, they are new to young people, and this one always stirs my blood), that a young minister once asked the Duke of Wellington what he thought of foreign missions, and the

brave old soldier thundered out, "Look to your marching orders!" What did he mean? Turn to the last chapter of Matthew, 19th verse, and you will see. The soldier doesn't question his marching orders; he simply obeys.

Some girls may sneer at you for going to missionary meetings; they may say with an air, imitating some older people, "I don't believe in missions," as if that settled it. Then please ask them if they believe in their beautiful homes, in their books and pictures, in their schools and churches, and tell them they are indebted to missions for all these. If missionaries had not gone to England years ago, when the people were barbarians; and long before that, if Paul had not gone over into Macedonia, where would we be, pray? But do it gently, girls, so as to win them. "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." That was written to a minister, but I can't see why we may not take a hint from it.

There are a great many reasons why you should be interested in missions, enough to fill a dozen letters. The chief one I have given; because it is the Lord's command. "The second is like unto it. Thou shalt love

thy neighbor as thyself." "Thy neighbor," my dear, now when steam and electricity have made the world so small, is the little child-widow in India; the foot-bound maiden in China; the degraded, unclothed girl who is sold for so many cows in Africa. To "love thy neighbor as thyself" is to give her the same Bible that you have, to tell her of the same Saviour who saves you; and this you can best do by praying and working for missions.

XXII.

MISSIONARIES.

IT is difficult to say whether missions grow out of missionaries, or missionaries out of missions, so it was a question which letter should come first. I use this word in its larger sense; a missionary is one who is sent. Christ said in that wonderful prayer, "As Thou didst send me into the world, even so send I them into the world." Girls, do you ever think that in "them" He included you and me, that we are sent as truly as the disciples who were with Him then? For if you read on a little, you will see that the Saviour was praying not only for the little band who were faithful then, but for everybody who should believe on Him to the end of time. I like to think that He looked down the centuries and saw you and me when He said it, and with omniscient glance perceived what each would be fitted for. Therefore, it is well to fix it in your minds that you are not here in any haphazard kind of a way, but for a purpose.

Somebody will say, "Oh! do let the girls have a good time while they are young; all this will come when they are older." "Beg pardon, madam, but you are mistaken. I fear it will not unless it begins now." I want you to have the best kind of a time, and I don't know a better way than for you to begin now to think what you are sent for. I venture to say that more than one of you already dreams of the future, and is planning for it too. Now put into those dreams the high thought, "I am sent"—the Saviour says sent as He was. That must mean to be good, to do good; in every place to do the will of the Father. I cannot say, girls, how much this thought, put into all your plans, will change your outward lives. It may not change them at all, because you may be, so far as circumstances are concerned, just where He would have you stay. But it will make you take every plan of life to Him for approval, it will make His guidance very practical. It will involve three things: to be what He would have you be, to go where He would have you go, to do what He would have you do.

It seems simple, does it not? and it is simple. Only to remember that you are sent, and to ask God to teach you so that you may

do your own, and not the errand of somebody else. It would not answer very well, when the mother has said, "Alice, I wish you would stop at the dressmaker's on your way to school this morning," and "Lucy, please go to the grocer's and order coffee sent up," if Lucy should decide she would go to the dressmaker's, as in that case there would be no coffee for dinner.

There are a great many errands to be done in the world; errands small and vast. Try to find out your own; think about it, pray about it; especially keep an open heart to hear the first whisper of God's Spirit concerning it.

There was a child once who was called to do a very painful errand. Four times the message came to him before he knew the voice, and then he said, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and the Lord gave him strength to do the hard duty. So to you will come strength for any path God wishes you to walk in.

It wouldn't be in my heart to close this letter without saying that I hope some of you may become missionaries in the sense usually given to the word. It is such a beautiful work, such a happy work to those who go. I

have met a great many of these missionaries, and I never saw one who did not rejoice in her errand. You couldn't say as much for everything. I remember one who had taught a thousand heathen women to read. Think of that! A thousand women could read the Bible just because she was sent. Now, suppose she had thought her errand was to stay at home and lead the life of a society woman, what a disastrous mistake it would have been.

My dears, I am by no means saying that society life is wrong, only it would have been wrong for her; you may be ordered right into it, there to lead the beautiful life of a Christian woman. I only wish you each to remember that you are sent, and earnestly to seek and find the what-for of the sending.

XXIII.

CONCLUDING.

YOU will not have read these letters so far, without finding out that I wish you to be good. As Charles Kingsley says, "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever"; though for that matter goodness and cleverness are not incompatible. The longer I live, the more I am convinced that what God wants of us is character. He wishes doing to grow out of being. If you get this thought into your minds, it will be the key to many riddles. Now in these letters I have been trying to talk about some things which go to make up character; in other words, trying to throw out hints and suggestions which will help you to be good. Here and there I have touched on the aid you may receive from the Bible, but it will do no harm to impress that truth more strongly still. It ought to be the most practical book to every one of us.

If you have a sum to work in arithmetic you turn to the rule; if you start on a rail-

way journey, you take the guide-book and follow it implicitly. Now, why not use just as much common sense in the guidance of a life? Why not turn to the Word which is a lamp to the feet, and a light to the path? It will tell you how to keep pure in heart, in a sinful world, and by and by when you get older and sad days come, its promises will bring such comfort as no human words can express.

There is another help not less important than this in determining character. You cannot live one day aright; you cannot grow into gracious, useful womanhood without prayer. And this also I would have you regard, not as something far away and mysterious, but as a real approach to a real friend. True, there is something which inspires awe and fear in the thought of God displeased with us for our sins, but if, as I trust is the case with you and me, we are forgiven, then God has accepted us as His children. Therefore we may go to Him as to a father, and I believe we please Him best the more we feel such a relationship. I would just as readily ask Him to help me to learn a lesson, or to make me sweet-mannered, or to keep me from being ill-natured, or to give me a new gown, as for any great spiritual gift. One request

might not be as important as another, but I should be certain my Father would give to each its proper attention, because He has told me in "everything" to make my requests known to Him. As the years go by you will learn what happiness it adds to life, to take everything as from Him, to trace every event, be it glad or sad, to His hand.

Another thing, my girls. We grow to be like the friends with whom we are intimate, and I have before referred to this well-known fact. Therefore I say with reverence, be intimate with Christ if you would be like Him. Talk with Him daily, seek His aid in the most commonplace affairs, as well as in great matters; never believe that there is any trouble or any wish too small to bring to Him.

To your merry, young eyes, this may seem a very serious letter. Serious it is meant to be, but not gloomy in the least. Banish forever from your mind the thought that religion is gloomy. As Christians, we ought to show to others that ours is the glad life, the free life. Every flower that blooms is for us, because it is in our Father's garden.

This is my last letter to you, and I could not close a series which has given me much pleasure, without telling you what I know to be

true, that the Bible and prayer under the Spirit's power are the great aids to useful living.

I am loath to say good-bye; let me rather give to the sweet old word its true meaning—God be with you. Yes, God be with you every one, dear girls, for if He be with you, and if He be with me, sometime—somewhere we shall meet.



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